



**Senior Officials Meeting of the 9th Meeting of the Ministers of
Transport of the ECO Member States**

(Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan 1st May 2018)

Report

Senior Officials Meeting of 9th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the ECO Member States (Turkmenbashi, 1st May 2018)

The Senior Officials Meeting (SoM) of the 9th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the ECO Member States was held on 1st May, 2018 in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan. The meeting was attended by the high level delegations of all the ECO Member States. A delegation from ECO Secretariat also participated in the event. The list of participants is attached as **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

2. H.E. Mr. Akmammedov Mammet, the Deputy Minister of the Railway Transport of Turkmenistan inaugurated the meeting by welcoming the participants and wished fruitful discussions during the course of the meeting. He stated that Turkmenistan is an active participant in creation of integrated multi modal system of transit infrastructure. He termed Turkmenistan as an important segment of the world economy. He further stated that Turkmenistan hosted a high level conference on the role of transit transport corridor. In the end he highlighted the important issues to be discussed during the course of meeting.

3. Mr. Ahmad Saffari, Director (Transport & Communications) of the ECO Secretariat also delivered brief statement. He thanked Turkmenistan for hosting the event and extending warm hospitality to the participants.

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

4. H.E. Mr. Akmammedov Mammet was elected as the Chairman of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The Meeting adopted Agenda as proposed by the Secretariat. A copy of Draft Agenda is attached as **Annex-II**.

Agenda Item No. 4

Appointment of the Drafting Committee

6. The Senior Officials' Meeting was assigned as Drafting Committee for preparing the report of the Ministerial Meeting and the Turkmenbashi Declaration.

Agenda Item No. 5

Review of the implementation of the TTFA

7. The Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) was signed in May 1998 during the 5th ECO Summit Meeting. So far, all ECO Member States, except Uzbekistan, have signed the Agreement, and all the signatories, except Turkmenistan, have ratified it. The agreement entered into force in May, 2006. As per Article 36 of the TTFA, the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) has been set up to monitor and coordinate implementation of the TTFA. The TTCC has established four technical committees on Road, Railway, Insurance and Customs Transit.

8. The Meeting requested the Uzbek authorities to sign and ratify the TTFA. The Meeting also requested Turkmenistan to ratify the agreement at the earliest possible.
9. The representative of Uzbekistan informed the meeting that the government is considering the issue and will inform the Secretariat on the decision in near future.
10. The representative of Turkmenistan reminded the meeting that “in March 2009 Turkmenistan became an associated member of Economic Cooperation Organization”. He further informed that Turkmenistan is fully aware of the importance of the TTFA and will update the Secretariat through diplomatic channels.

i. The recent Meetings of TTCC and its auxiliary bodies

a) The Railway Committee

11. The representative of the ECO Secretariat updated the meeting on the meetings of the Railway committee held till the last Ministerial Meeting. He informed the 8th Ministerial Meeting mandated the Secretariat to revise the ECO Rail Routes Map every three year, the revised version of the ECO Road Transit Routes Map were prepared in 2015 based on the updates provided by the member states. He further stated that since more than three years have passed the maps require revision in the light of updates provided by the member states.
12. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran seconded the Secretariat’s proposal to revise the railway maps and expressed willingness to cooperate with the Secretariat and other Member States in this regard.
13. The representative of Turkmenistan informed the meeting that it will provide the nomination of national consultant on GIS through diplomatic channels.
14. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that it has already nominated the focal point on GIS who is in the process of gathering data for completion of templates and the completed templates will be shared with the Secretariat upon completion in near future.
15. The representative of the ECO Secretariat informed the meeting that the Secretariat will revise the maps as per information received from the Member States, however the Secretariat requires financial mechanism for this purpose.
16. In this regard the meeting requested the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to allocate appropriate amount for revision of the rail and road maps of ECO.
17. The Meeting requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with the updates enabling the ECO Secretariat to publish revised ECO Railway Transit Routes Map incorporating all the updates provided by the Member States.
18. The meeting welcomed the joint Initiative of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) for establishment of a Transport Geographic Information System (GIS) of their common member countries in

the ECO region as a platform for monitoring the quality of transport infrastructure and regional connectivity among the ECO Member Countries and appreciated the active role of the ECO Secretariat in coordination of the data collection from member countries for this important project.

19. The meeting requested the Member States (other than Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkey) to instruct focal points nominated for GIS to convey the completed templates expeditiously to the ECO Secretariat.

b) The Road Committee

20. The representative of the ECO Secretariat updated the meeting on the meetings the road committee held till the last Ministerial Meeting. He informed the 8th Ministerial Meeting mandated the Secretariat to revise the ECO Road Transit Routes Map every three year, the revised version of the ECO Road Transit Routes Map were prepared in 2015 based on the updates provided by the member states. He stressed upon the revision of the maps.

21. The representative of the ECO Secretariat informed the meeting that in order to facilitate the drivers performing international transport of goods the ECO Secretariat proposed and designed "ECO Visa Exemption Sticker Scheme" and presented key principles of the scheme to the "First ECO Senior Consular Officials Meeting on Facilitation of Visa for Drivers" (Tehran, October 2016). The revised version of the Scheme "ECO Visa Exemption Sticker Scheme" prepared based on the comments of the participating delegates has been circulated among the member states for their comments and views. So far, feedback from Afghanistan and Tajikistan has been received where Afghanistan rejected the proposal, whereas the response of Tajikistan was general.

22. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran seconded the Secretariat's proposal to revise the road maps and expressed willingness to cooperate with the Secretariat and other Member States in this regard.

23. The representative of Turkmenistan also welcomed the proposal of Secretariat to revise the road maps.

24. The representative of the ECO Secretariat informed the meeting that the Secretariat will revise the maps as per information received from the Member States, however the Secretariat requires financial mechanism for this purpose.

25. The representative of the ECO Secretariat also requested Member States to provide update on expenses of road transit transportation.

26. The representative of Republic of Turkey requested the Secretariat to circulate a separate note for seeking data on transit fees and charges.

27. The representative of Azerbaijan informed the meeting that since the last revision of maps many routes have been constructed, therefore, the revision of maps is necessary. Regarding the charges and transit fees, the representative of Azerbaijan informed the meeting that upon receipt of official request in this regard, the relevant authorities will provide the expenditure on road transport shipments.

28. The representative of Pakistan informed the meeting that the Government of Pakistan is massively engaged in construction of new motorways and highways for efficient transport connectivity to 2 Pakistani Ports at Karachi and 1 at Gwadar. Therefore, in view of this new emerging scenario, Pakistan supports the revision of the ECO Road Transit Routes Map already published by ECO Secretariat.

29. The representative of Pakistan further informed the meeting that as per Pakistan's Custom's Rules, there are no customs duties and taxes charged from traffic in transit by motor vehicles except charges for the specific services rendered in accordance with domestic legislations including toll taxes, road maintenance, etc.

30. As regard the ECO visa exemption sticker scheme the Pakistani representative supported the scheme considering the fact that visa for drivers and crew members is most essential component of trade and transportation cycle. He further informed the meeting that Pakistan has already signed and ratified the Agreement titled "Agreement for Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen of ECO Region" which covers expeditious issuance of multiple entry and transit visas within 72 hours. The representative of Pakistan encouraged the other countries to sign the agreement at the earliest for its successful implementation.

31. As regards the CMR the representative of Pakistan informed the meeting that recognizing the need to accede to CMR Convention with the objective to facilitate international transport, necessary stakeholders consultation which is pre-requisite under the law to accede to any International Treaty or Convention has been carried out. CMR is now in final stages with the Federal Cabinet for approval subsequent to which we would be able to deposit Instrument of Accession to UN Treaty Section soon.

32. The representative of Pakistan further informed that Pakistan is in advance stages of achieving consensus among concerned stakeholders on ADR. The consultation process will be completed soon and the remaining process hopefully will be completed within this year. He further requested ECO Secretariat to organize capacity building training workshop for Pakistani officials.

33. The representative of Iran proposed that the Secretariat may request member states to find a mechanism for reducing and harmonizing the cost in order to make transportation cost effective.

34. The representative of Turkmenistan informed the meeting that it applies the custom duties as per its customs code irrespective of type of transport.

35. The Meeting requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with the updates enabling the ECO Secretariat to publish revised ECO Road Transit Routes Map indicating all the updates provided by the Member States.

36. The meeting requested the Member States to convey to the ECO Secretariat information on expenses of road transit transportation for consolidation and placing it on the ECO website for utilization of the information by the transport

companies/businessmen in the ECO Member States.

37. The Meeting requested Member States to expedite conveying comments and views on revised “ECO Visa Exemption Sticker Scheme”.

38. The Meeting requested the Member States to provide updates on the latest developments on accession/implementation of international facilitation tools as mentioned above since the last meeting of the Road Committee and capacity building/training needs if any.

c) The Insurance Committee

39. The Meeting requested the Member States (except Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey) to provide their comments and views on the Financial Guarantee Mechanism for implementation of the ECO White Card Scheme.

40. The ECO Secretariat was asked to consider the possibility of inviting representatives of the insurance sector to conduct a meeting on the sidelines of the next HLWG on ITI Road Corridor.

41. The representative of Secretariat informed the meeting that in line with Article 22 and Annex V of TTFA stipulating establishment of the international compulsory motor vehicle third party liability insurance scheme the 1st Meeting of the Insurance Committee of the TTCC (Tehran, July, 2008) discussed and adopted the draft ECO Interim Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability Insurance Scheme (MVTPL).

42. Provisions of Article 22 and Annex V of TTFA have been also addressed under regional study on the “insurance component” of the Joint ECO/IDB Project on implementation of TTFA which enabled to prepare the report representing the comprehensive information on the status of MVTPL insurance scheme in the Member States, including the information and recommendations for implementation of the White Card Scheme as an interim system on the way towards the international compulsory MVTPL insurance scheme, so called Green Card System.

43. The representative of Pakistan informed the meeting that although significant progress has been achieved on ITI Road Transport Corridor however, the Financial Guarantee Mechanism and Bilateral Agreements between National Motor Insurers’ Bureau are the two main issues which require attention of the Member State. In order to find a solution, the Secretariat may consider holding a Special Meeting of representatives of the concerned authorities of the Member States.

d) The Customs Transit Committee

44. The representative of Pakistan briefed the meeting on the latest status of formalities with TIR Convention.

45. The meeting requested the ECO Secretariat for organizing a test run of loaded trucks on ITI Route in coordination with the enroute Member States, by the end of 2018.

46. The Meeting requested the Member States to continue providing regular updates to the meetings of the Customs Committee of TTCC on national plans to modernize BCPs and undertake other actions in line with Five-year Plan of Action.

47. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the meeting that most of the post accession formalities regarding TIR have been completed. TIR rules have been formulated and notified by Pakistan Customs. National Authorities comprising all important stakeholders Ministries/Organizations has been set up for grant of approval of road vehicles and containers to be used for international transportation. After the formalities by Pakistan, International Road Transport Union (IRU) has notified to all its Member Associations worldwide that TIR System stands operational in Pakistan. The pilot run of TIR is expected during the next month.

48. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that in line with the recommendations of TTFA and RKC, Iran Customs has taken the following measures:

- i. Receiving Electronic Manifest
- ii. Transit Intelligent System within Integrated Comprehensive Customs System (ICCS) to fully computerize procedures
- iii. Electronic Pre-Declaration by transportation companies
- iv. Recognition of the origin seal for facilitating transit
- v. Reduction of physical inspection
- vi. Avoidance of transshipment

49. The representative of Iran further informed that Iran Customs has authorized the local Customs neighbouring Pakistan border for TIR Carnet indicating that ITI test run is possible from Iran side. He further informed about the measures taken by the Iran Customs on the items of Action Plan recommended by the report of feasibility study on implementation of Customs provisions of TTFA.

50. The representative of Turkmenistan informed the meeting that the State Customs Services of Turkmenistan is regularly working to improve and modernize customs services with the able support of international partners. Turkmenistan is modernizing border crossing points in accordance with the modern standards by introducing new technologies and built 18 customs terminals with all infrastructures, and installed a specialized inspection system. He further informed about the creation of new customs points on the State Border of Turkmenistan with Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Iran. It was also informed that Turkmenistan has implemented special system for inspection of cargo without offloading. He informed about the implementation of ASYCUDA World project by 2019.

e) The TTCC Meetings

51. The Meeting requested Afghanistan to convey the proposed date for organizing the next TTCC meeting along with the meetings of the Road Committee and Customs Transit Committee.

52. Turkmenistan briefed on the latest status of ratification. Uzbekistan also briefed the Meeting on progress towards its accession to TTFA.

ii. ECO/IDB Joint Project on implementation of TTFA

53. The Meeting urged the Member States to start the implementation of the Five-year Plan of Action recommendations on three major components, notably upgradation/modernization of existing BCPs, improvement of customs related infrastructure and institutional/legal strengthening.
54. The meeting requested the ECO Secretariat to hire local/international consultant/s for updating the ECO's Road and Rail Development Plans, expand them to cover road and railway networks captured in the ECO's Road and Railway Network Maps, translate them to digital GIS maps supported by updated online data/information, and provide the member countries with direct access to its GIS Database.
55. The Meeting requested the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to allocate necessary financial resources from the ECO's TTFA Fund and Feasibility Study General Purpose Fund.
56. The meeting requested the ECO Secretariat to regularly monitor the implementation of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on implementation of TTFA. This includes implementation of the ECO Railway Network Development Plan, ECO Road Network Development Plan, and Five-year Plan of Action on Customs.
57. The Meeting took note of the huge investment gaps in the transport infrastructure networks and the need for mobilization of concessional financial resources for supporting regional transport corridors and connectivity in the region, and requested the ECO Secretariat, ECO Trade and Development Bank, IDB and the UNECE to coordinate establishment of a partnership/coordination platform of financial institutions and to consider the establishment of an ECO Infrastructure Fund for supporting regional projects.

Agenda Item No. 6

Review of the progress in the field of railway

i. Container Trains on Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty

58. The meeting requested the Secretariat to discuss the preliminary plan at the upcoming meeting of the HLWG and asked Member States for their preferred date for that meeting.
59. The Secretariat briefed the meeting about the commercialization study conducted for the project and provided detailed briefing about the components of study. It was informed that the operational plan of the project will be discussed in the next HLWG meeting. The Secretariat urged the Member States to participate in the HLWG meeting. It was also informed that in order to gather data from the enroute Member States, questionnaires will be prepared. The Secretariat informed the meeting that after the approval of Corridor Management Mechanism Plan by the next HLWG meeting, a test run of the train would be initiated.
60. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran thanked the Secretariat for the comprehensive update on the study and informed the meeting that one of the main reasons of non-functionalization of this route is lack of adequate container cargoes in

both directions. He further stated that in order to functionalize the container trains on these routes, tariff and time table and other technical issues should also be agreed between the enroute Member States. He emphasized the need to convene the HLWG meeting to resolve these issues and requested the ECO Secretariat for supervision and follow up.

61. The Meeting requested the member states to consider hosting the event.

ii- Container Train on Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) Route

62. The representatives of the enroute countries briefed the Meeting on the latest status of the operation of this Container Train.

63. The representative of the ECO Secretariat informed the meeting that infrastructure for the project is available but due to technical issues regular run of the train on this particular route is not possible. One MoU between BALO and Pakistan Railways had been signed to help Pakistan without any tangible progress. It was also informed that during the last HLWG the Turkish side was requested to provide new time table and tariff. The Secretariat appreciated receipt of revised time table and tariff form Pakistan. The Pakistan representative requested the ECO Secretariat to conduct the similar commercialization study for the ITI Railway Corridor on the pattern of Istanbul-Bandar Abbas-Almaty corridor.

64. So far, revised tariffs and timetable has been received from the concerned authorities of Pakistan. The meeting requested the other enrout countries to do so.

65. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed that upon receiving the tariff and time table from the Republic of Turkey they will convey their time table and tariffs accordingly.

66. Turkish delegate informed the meeting that Turkish side will give the time table after completion of repairing and maintenance work as the time table will be more meaningful after development of infrastructure. He further informed that Turkey can share the requisite information in the next HLWG meeting.

67. The representative of Iran informed the meeting that presently export, import and transit cargoes are transported by rail from Iran to Pakistan. In 2017, the import of 9175 tons and export of 33436 tons and 12026 tons of transit cargoes were carried from Zahedan to Pakistan. However, it was informed that the trade capacity between the two countries is more than the present capacity of this corridor. He further highlighted the underlying problems of this corridor such as lack of freight from Pakistan to Turkey, lack of enough fuel for Pakistani trains, lack of sufficient Pakistani wagons for carrying the cargo, the low axle load of Pakistan route in Quetta-Taftan, long stopping time of wagons on the border of Iran and Pakistan as well as the low capacity of Pakistan wagons etc. He termed the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Quetta-Taftan rail route should be the top priority of Pakistan Railways.

68. The representative of Pakistan informed the meeting that during the recent meeting between the Federal Minister of Railway of Pakistan and the Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Islamic Republic of Iran at Islamabad on April 12, 2018. It was jointly agreed to take measures for revival of Quetta-Taftan railway route. During the meeting it was also agreed to increase trade between Iran and Pakistan.

69. The representative of Afghanistan asked whether the upgradation of Quetta-Taftan-Zahedan railway line is a part of the CPEC project.

70. The representative of Pakistan informed that the upgradation of Quetta-Taftan-Zahedan line is under consideration since before the visualization of CPEC project due to mutual railway operations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan since 1959. The upgradation of this line falls in the third phase under the CPEC project. However, under its third phase 612 kms will be upgraded in Pakistan and 94 kms will be upgraded from Taftan to Zahedan. The representative of Pakistan informed that Pakistan has officially received indication from the Russian Government for upgradation of the Quetta-Taftan-Zahedan railway line which is under consideration with the Ministry of Railways, government of Pakistan.

71. Iran supported the commercial study for ITI route as proposed by Pakistan

iii. Commercialization of the railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran

72. The Meeting has been updated on the Project and welcomed the establishment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been established at ECO Secretariat with recruitment of the Project Officer. Nominations of national experts have been received from Iran and Kazakhstan. Turkmenistan was asked to introduce their focal point for the study. It was also informed that negotiations on the Memorandum of Agreement between ECO and UNESCAP to establish an appropriate legal framework for implementation activities between two institutions are at final stage.

73. The meeting urged the ECO Secretariat to expedite signing of MoA with UNESCAP or any other relevant international organization enabling immediate run of the project.

74. The meeting proposed that IDB may be regularly kept updated on the developments of the project.

75. The representative of Kazakhstan informed the meeting that volume of cargo has tendency to increase passage of cargoes through Bolashak station of Kazakhstan at border of Turkmenistan. Notably in 2015 it was 647, 300 tons, in 2016 678,000 tons and 2017 815,300 tons. In three years more than 2 million tons passed through this station. The meeting was informed that Kazakhstan has designed a draft agreement for providing preliminary information on cargoes and forwarded to Turkmenistan side for their consideration. The Kazakhstan has also sent the draft agreement to Turkmenistan through officials channels seeking their views.

76. The representative of Turkmenistan responded that the authorities are in the process of installing ASYCUDA. It was also informed that Turkmenistan has agreement for the exchange of preliminary information with Iran and the same arrangement will be considered with Kazakhstan after installation of ASYCUDA. Tariff rates for KTI proposed by Turkmen side is 0.12 US \$ for 20 feet container trains for each container/kilometer (apart from additional charges) and 0.24 US\$ for 40 feet container trains and above.

77. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran questioned for the construction of broad gauge line in the territory of Turkmenistan until Inche-Boroun border point. The representative of Turkmenistan informed that a meeting between Turkmenistan and Iran authorities was scheduled to be held on this corridor to discuss the issues on 30 April 2018 which was postponed by Turkmen authorities due to the another important event of Turkmenbashi seaport inauguration. The representative of Turkmenistan further informed that new dates for the meeting have been proposed to the Iranian side on 8th May 2018 and Iranian side has accepted the proposal.

iv. Latest development of construction of the railway from China to Europe through Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran (KTAI):

78. The meeting was informed that Kyrgyz Republic is the only enroute country with no feasibility study done as yet.

79. The enroute Member States briefed the Meeting on the latest developments in implementation of this project in their respective territories.

80. The meeting requested Afghanistan to convey the dates of the Ministerial meeting on KTAI.

81. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that Segment Khaf-Herat is divided into 4 segments, two of which being in Iran, and the other two segments being in Afghanistan. Construction of Iran rail route from Khaf until Shamtigh border point with the length of 77 km has already been finished and construction of the third segment in the territory of Afghanistan is in process by Iranian side. This segment is 62 km, which is being constructed from Shamtigh border until Ghorian Station in Afghanistan. The first phase of this segment with the length of 30 kms has almost been completed and it will be inaugurated very soon. The construction of rail route from Ghorian Station until Geno station upto Herat Airport, with the length of 87 km will be constructed by Afghanistan government.

82. The representative of Afghanistan informed the meeting that a considerable portion of this corridor i.e. 902 kilometers is inside the territory of Afghanistan where the pre-feasibility and feasibility study from Sherkhan Bandar to Mazar-e-Sharif as well as the study from Mazar-e-Sharif to Shibargan are completed. Afghanistan is in discussion with ADB and other agencies to fund construction works. From Shibargan to Herat around 460 km pre-feasibility study has been completed. First three segments has been agreed to be done by Iran. So far, first two segments have been completed and as regards the third segment in the territory of Afghanistan (62 KM), the construction of this

particular segment has been started and will be completed in 3 months. Regarding segment four (43KM), the meeting was informed that the procurement process has been initiated and after completion of procurement process the construction work will be started.

83. The Afghan delegate requested Iran to provide Rules and Regulations of Export by Rail. Iran requested Afghanistan to send official letter for seeking information.

84. The Afghan delegate informed that exact date for KTAI will be provided through official channels.

85. The delegation of Kyrgyz Republic informed the meeting that the most important issue for conducting feasibility study is financing which is being discussed with Chinese colleagues and the findings of the discussion will be shared with the ECO Secretariat.

86. Iran requested Secretariat for following up the active involvement of China in this corridor and also its participation in the next Ministerial meeting.

v. Latest developments of construction of “Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan)” railway

87. The representatives of I.R of Iran and Republic of Azerbaijan briefed the Meeting on the latest developments.

88. The meeting requested Iran to convey to the Secretariat the date for the 5th HLWG meeting. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed that they will announce the date through diplomatic channels in near future.

89. The representative of Azerbaijan informed the meeting that an agreement between Iran and Azerbaijan was signed on 28th March, 2018 regarding financing of construction of Astara-Rasht railway line in the territory of Iran.

90. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that Azerbaijan Railways has constructed its rail route with the length of 8.5 km inside its territory until the border with two countries. Moreover, according to the agreement between two countries, Azerbaijan has constructed the rail route with the length of 1.3 km from border until Astara Terminal inside Iran and it was inaugurated in 29th March 2018 with the presence of two Presidents of both countries. This project includes construction of border bridge and four terminals for oil, general cargo, grains and containers. Presently, 3 lines out of 7 lines inside the terminal are operational. Azerbaijan is investing for the construction of the station tracks as well as construction of the above mentioned four terminals. The construction of the last missing link on this route, i.e. Rasht-Astara with the length of 164 kms will be financed by Azerbaijan government and its agreement has been signed and finalized by two countries. It was further informed that by the time of completion of Rasht-Astara project, cargo transit from Astara to the south ports of Iran will be made by combined transport and the required agreements have already been made between the countries.

Agenda item No. 7.

Review of the progress in the field of road transport

i. ECO Road Corridors on Kyrgyz Republic-Tajikistan- Afghanistan- Iran (KTAI) and Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) routes

91. The ECO representative briefed the meeting on the latest status of ongoing field study. Notably, it was indicated that a huge data/information have been collected by the international consultant through desk research, from the national consultants for the study based on the templates/questionnaires and during field visits to the road segments of ITI and KTAI and border crossing points including ports of Chabahar and Karachi. The meeting was informed that an interim report has been conveyed to the ECO Secretariat which accordingly will be circulated shortly for comments and vies of the enroute member states and IRU, a partner of ECO for the study. The meeting requested the international consultant to consider comments and views of IRU and the enroute countries, if any, in the process of preparing outcome documents.

92. The meeting urged the ECO Secretariat to continue its collaboration with IRU and enroute member states at post-study phase to implement major recommendations to functionalize the corridors.

ii. Monitoring regular run of trucks in the ECO region

93. The Meeting appreciated ECO and IRU for joint collaboration to conduct the practical project.

94. The meeting proposed that ECO and IRU may utilize findings of ECO-RMT and other important regional studies in the course of test run of loaded trucks along road corridors.

Agenda Item No. 8

Ways for expediting the establishment of the ECOLPAF

95. The Meeting requested the member states interested in joining ECOLPAF to expedite conveying requisite documents to ECO Secretariat and UTIKAD.

96. The Meeting decided on ways and means to expedite the establishment of ECOLPAF.

97. The representative of Turkey informed that UTIKAD is still waiting for the missing documents from the Member States.

Agenda Item No. 9.

Discussion on maritime cooperation

98. The Meeting discussed new initiatives for development of marine cooperation.

99. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the meeting that Maritime Cooperation is an important area to facilitate trade and transport activities in

ECO region. He informed that Pakistan has two well established sea ports at Karachi and one deep sea port at Gwadar to effectively handle transit trade. In order to increase cooperation in the field of maritime the representative of Pakistan requested the ECO Secretariat to consider convening the 5th Meeting of ECO Heads of Reference Marine Organizations (HRMO) during 2nd half of 2018.

100. The meeting requested the interested Member States to consider hosting the 5th Meeting of the HRMO.

101. The representative of Turkmenistan provided an overview of the facilities to be provided in the Turkmenbashi Sea Port and termed that this sea port will give impetus to trade in Asia and Europe. He informed that the annual capacity of new sea port is 17 million tons and in combination with old sea port total capacity will be 25-26 million tons.

Agenda Item No. 10.

Discussion on cooperation in the field of civil aviation.

102. The Meeting discussed establishment of a working Group on Civil aviation and the draft MoU.

103. The Turkish delegate reminded that the issue was decided in the previous RPC for deletion.

104. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran agreed with the proposal of Turkish delegate.

105. Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan proposed establishment of ECO Working Group on Civil Aviation and recommended following measures for consideration of ECO Member States for enhancing cooperation in the field of civil aviation: (i) liberalization of passenger cooperation on 3rd, 4th and 5th freedom basis within ECO region; (ii) liberal treatment in aviation support services like in the areas of ground handling catering aircraft maintenance; (iii) liberalization of pure cargo operations within ECO region; (iv) Cooperate in provision of training facilities among ECO States in Aviation fields e.g. Passenger Safety and Security Services, Air Traffic Services, Airport Management etc. and (v) liberalization of visa regime.

106. Turkmenistan proposed its air ports as Civil Aviation hub.

107. The representative of Afghanistan appreciated the proposal of Turkmenistan.

108. The representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan proposed to initiate the study and technical assessment of establishing an Air Transport Hub within the ECO region preferably in the landlocked countries. This air transport hub will act as catalyst for regional passenger and goods' transport and benefit intra-regional civil aviation links, as well as enhance civil aviation collaboration and promote tourism activities among all ECO Member States.

Agenda Item No. 11.

Discussion of the Turkmenbashi Declaration

109. The Meeting considered and agreed on the Turkmenbashi Declaration to be submitted for the approval of ECO Ministers of Transport.

Agenda Item No. 12.

Any other business

110. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed the meeting that Afghanistan is willing to initiate Kabul-Tehran-Istanbul multimodal transport corridor. A trilateral meeting may be convened in one of the enroute Member States to agree on the mechanism for required follow up actions to operationalize this corridor.

Agenda Item No. 13.

Discussion of date and venue of the next Meeting

111. The Meeting requested the ECO Secretariat to liaise with the Member States to determine the dates and venue of the 10th Meeting of Ministers of Transport of ECO Member States.

Agenda Item No. 14.

Preparation of the draft Report for final approval of the ECO Ministers of Transport.

112. The Meeting considered and agreed on the report to be submitted to the 9th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the ECO member States, for their endorsement and Chairman announced closing of the meeting.
